

An Inaugural Dissertation

on

Fever

Philip D. Williamson

admitted March 10. 1820.

By Philip D. Williamson

at the City

No 164 High Street

before the faculty

the important question

Phil. S. Williamson

March 12, 1852

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D^r Cullen remarks that "fevers, after beginning with some degree of cold shivering, show some increase of heat, & increase frequency of pulse, with the interruption and disorder of several functions, particularly some diminution of strength, in the animal functions". Although it is generally admitted, that D^r Cullen has been as accurate an observer of the Phenomena of Fevers, and has described them as accurately as any other - yet this definition of Fevers, will not by any means hold good in every case, as perhaps one of the circumstances ~~etc.~~ which he has mentioned, as indicative of Seditive action, invariably occurs in every Fever.

The theories of Fevers have been numerous & variously modified from the time of Hippocrates, to the present period; and at the present day there are various opinions respecting the nature of Fevers, and consequently various, in the mode of treatment.

So much however has been written on the subject

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of Fevers, and that too by persons whose talents are am-
ple opportunity, for acquiring information on the subject.
have rendered competent to the task, that it would be
seem'd presumption in one, whose experience has been
but small, to flatter myself that any thing that I
could say on the subject, would lend, in any degree, to
explain the nature of Fever in general, or lead to a
better mode of treatment: My object therefore will be
merely to give a brief description of a Fever, of a pe-
culiar nature, which prevails in a part of the counties
of Loudoun & Fauquier, Virginia, in which I resided a
short time during the last summer.

The disease which I design describing has
received the appellation of Everlasting Fever, from several
eminent physicians, from the circumstance of the long
duration of the febrile action of the Pulse, But the
name by which I shall designate it, is, Chronic Infla-
matory Fever, which name I believe was first used
by Dr. W. Smith, with whom I spent two or three months
last summer. Dr. Smith has seen a greater number

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of cases of this disease, than any other physician with whom I am acquainted, (he has had not less than a hundred cases since the year 1813. —

Dr. Smith lives in a small village, about four miles distant from the Blue ridge, on the east side of it and but few persons who are affected with this disease, were more remote from the mountain than six or eight miles. —

This fever was attended in different individuals with such a variety of symptoms, that I am at a loss to know, in what manner I can best describe it. In no two instances probably are the symptoms the same. The action of the pulse is the most uniform, being generally what is called synochus. 800000

There appears to be a peculiar action of the pulse in this disease, which will lead persons, who have been accustomed to examine the pulse of patients, labouring under this disease, to suspect its existence immediately. *

Conjoined with this affection of the pulse, the usual symptoms are, pain in some part of the chest, sometimes pain and swelling in the region of the stomach and abdomen,

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frequent headache, coldness of the extremities, position
early the lower. In two instances mentioned by Dr. Smith
the abdomen was occasionally swollen to an enormous
size, and would again subside, without any violent cause.
In one instance the patient was confined to her bed, for
six months, with a severe pain in her head, which was
at length relieved by opium, but the fever still continued.

Several patients complained of nothing more, than great
debility, and in these cases, considerable emaciation took
place, without pain in any particular part of the body.

In many cases, probably in about one-third of those
which have occurred. There have been most of the symp-
toms of Dyspepsia - cardialgia, a gnawing or burning sen-
sation in the region of the stomach - flatulency, languor,
all excitations of various kinds, but commonly not acrid.

In some cases there were so many dyspeptic symptoms,
that some physicians of the highest standing, were at
first inclined to consider the whole as an epidemic dys-
pepsia, and under that impression have used all the reme-
dies recommended in that disease, without having in

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any one instance of this disease occurring - and having
seen this kind in their attempts to cure the disease, have not
yet been able to find a cure -

In several instances, the patients have been attacked with fevers
or, sometimes, with a few tremors, which local affections have been
caused by their administration remedies without effecting any, but
were common in the case - The disease has not as yet
terminated in the same shape or degree although several persons
have been attacked with each of them - In one or two instan-
ces there has been some local changes.

Women appear to be much more liable to the attack,
the disease than men - probably the number of men who
is affected with it, is to that of the women as five to ten or
more - Some physicians from this circumstance were led
to believe that this fever depends upon, and was kept
up by some arrangement in the organs proper to the female sex -
but a very close objection to this sentiment is that it is
not peculiar to females - Pregnancy has not been found
to have any effect in altering the action of the fever -
Almost every article of the Med. Ind. has been used



If the cause - is not a simple one, as in the
 case of a simple catarrh, it is more likely that the
 cause could be large. In affections of the
 lungs, it is not possible to see the point of
 the disease, as there is no permanent cause of
 it, nor does it have any cause, and it is not
 a simple one. — If the cause is not a
 simple one, it is not a simple one, and it is not
 a simple one, and it is not a simple one. —

The next day, when I went to the
at 10 A.M. I found a very
day was cloudy, and a heavy inflammatory fever.
The hot pain in the breast and side, and sometimes in
the head. I went again to the hospital in the afternoon
but they were, after dinner, as usual, only
in a more agitated position. I then
effected, the next day, a more recovery, and
on the 10th, I was considerably better. I then
was waiting. Several physicians were called.

[illegible]

respiration and we used every medicine which we
thought promised to be at all beneficial, and the only
one, from the use of which we perceived the least good
effects was the Digitalis, of which she took a large quan-
tity in infusion. - I did not employ much time
in was able to visit her, and her physicians and family
began using all possible means to using them, and
especially, particularly as the disease very little, and
might from them, other medicines were omitted.
She has been bled occasionally several times in
the lower, which is generally very high, and with-
standing which she looks liberally and continues to
eat and does not very often complain except of
some degree of debility, and occasionally of some pain
within the lower breast, or sides. She has not been
entirely free from the action of the fever for more
than six years. - Some of the Physicians who have
attended her, at first supposed she was to be kept
in a febrile state of the lungs. But she has
very little cough, nor most the usual symptoms



of the present - They have attributed it to
an affection of the nerves. But it is reasonable to sup-
pose that if there were such an affection in this
case, its residence would have been more clearly
developed, before this time. It was incidentally
a cause by other substances, viz. to a degree
and of the position of the uterus and its mem-
branes. But this supposition rests on no basis
or foundation, as either of the former; and there
is not the slightest evidence of any such re-
sult. - I am not, however, so, that it is
merely an inflammatory matter in the arterial system -
I could be led to believe, that there was some
such thing as an Arterial Fever; I should have no
objection in considering this fever as belonging to the
nerves - but even what I have seen of the disease
I am disposed to think, that the Arterial system
was caused by increasing affections, although such an
idea is not evident, in many cases -
The conflicting arguments respecting this fever



and to witness the difficulty of ascertaining anything
of its true nature, with certainty. "Causa latens
in latens".

The next case which I had an opportunity
of observing, was in 1835, a trifling case of
scarlatina, only 6 weeks of age, when I saw her last,
and she was confined to her bed, for two or three months;
she had a little cough, slight pain in her chest,
and was not unduly troubled with headache, she
suffered more annoyingly from debility. She has
the teeth, her nails, smooth, even hair, are parted.

Scarcely ever seen her face black, she has been
died every two or three days some new things given
for relief. She was clearly observed the erythematous
eruption, and was taken to her usual condition,
and was very healthy.

At this time was in state
of the fever. When I saw her last, the
age of 10 or 12 years was not the effect of a rising temperature
and probably from some other cause. The fever of her
was very peculiar. The preceding, the fever

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was nearly as active as before.

It seems that the disease in question has as first
a subduing the force, but only increases the
febrility, which was now the most urgent
symptom. Dr Smith changed his mode of
treatment. we made use of tonics, which for
any or two appeared to be serviceable, but in
the course of four or five days, he was obliged to
suspend their use, in consequence of their con-
stantly increasing the disease, and heightening all
the symptoms - particularly the pain on the breast,
side & head. Her pulse was raised considerably, much
more febrile and her strength not recruited.

Dr Smith smokes her and comes in & she remains
"very in situ quo", probably better than when
taking them or at any rate not worse. She is able
to get up, and walk a little about the house -
she continues to lose a little blood occasionally -

Dr Williams has been ill for more
than three years, in the first attack of the fever.

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and was bleo very frequently and violently.
She has been under the care of different Physicians
has taken medicines of various kinds, to a large amount
has been in a state of profuse salivation several times,
her force however remains unaltered - From her own
account, she is worse every other day, so that on one
day, she is able to be employed in the business of the
family, and on the next is obliged to keep her bed.
This is the only case wh^{ch} I have seen, in which
there appears to be any evident intermission.
She says, that for a considerable time after the com-
mencement of the disease, she had cold feet, which
symptom has now left her - She has pain in her head
left breast, and shoulder, particularly after taking
exercise, or exercise aggravates these symptoms -
Her stomach is in so worn out a state, that she
can eat nothing, but it has the effect of exciting
disagreeable sensations, and increasing the violence
of the Fever, On the worst days she has a burning
sensation at the sternum cordis, attended with a

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sensation, which she says is wholly indescribable at the top of the sternum, which extends in some degree to the left shoulder, and as it were through the joint. This sensation is such, that she sometimes feels, as if she must inevitably suffocate - This woman is about 35 years of age and has borne one or two children since her first attack.

— Mrs. S. P. was attacked about eighteen months ago, and has been under medical treatment ever since. In her case Dr. Smith has used almost every article of the Materia Medica, which he and other physicians who were called in consultation, thought at all calculated to be useful — independent of other means which were used, she has been bled twenty or thirty times; the tincture of Digitalis was used to a large amount, which produced a great degree of sickness, nausea, and vomiting; But all the means tried proved unavailing, I saw her first in August last, she complained

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of languor, heaviness, listlessness and disinclination to move &c. her head was much affected with pain she had heavy dull pain in her eyes, and in addition to these, there was morbid vigilance in so distressing a degree, that she seldom slept more than ~~two~~ or three hours in the twenty four. Although she had been under the treatment which I have mentioned above; her pulse was not so quick, and more full, than in most cases of this Fever which I had seen, notwithstanding which, she was walking about, and looked tolerably well. I detraited about $\frac{1}{2}$ vi of blood, which had the effect of reducing her pulse, for the time, but in about half an hour, I was astonished to find it nearly as active as before - As she was looking was the most distressing symptom with which she was affected, I was anxious to find out the cause of something which would have a tendency to relieve it, supposing the irritation which kept up the fever was seated in the stomach or intestines.

usual, I at first thought of using Camellia & other
oils, but the Effluvia which she had already
taken, had very frequently operated as an emetic,
without producing any beneficial effects.

As I had therefore not a real intention, and as,
with this intention, Opium was contraindicated, by the
state of the system, I proposed to Dr. Ferri, to use
a tea made in her case - he readily consented, and
I accordingly sent her a box of pills, each containing about
two grains of extract, with directions to take one, three times
a day. In the course of a few days I saw her, & was
pleased to find that she had been much improved,
the eyes considerably larger than heretofore - and the
affection of her head and eyes was greatly relieved.
As I had never seen the same exhibit, I was anxious
to ascertain its effect upon the pulse and action
of the bowels in the case of a woman like her, who
had been in a short time, & was the effect of
having her pulse altered to 120 per minute,
the treatment to use the pills at intervals until such

[illegible]

The improvement in her health was such, that she was able to
walk and her health was much better than it had been for
nearly two years. And her mind, which before was
of the somnolent character, but not so much as a negro.
In a letter which I received from Dr. Smith, dated 18th,
he informs me that she was still in the same state as
when I saw her, and that he derives so much benefit
from the use of the sulphate of Zinc in small doses as from
the colic. Dr. Smith has used the colic in several
other cases and with nearly equal benefit.

I might go on to enumerate cases, but those will
be sufficient to show, that this juice, whether made by
man, is a very extraordinary remedy. In some
cases it is marked by most of the usual symptoms,
Phlegm, Purulent, or Hæm, by those of Dyspepsia,
or by many other diseases, which would be mentioned,
and here it is worthy to notice, that since its first ap-
pearance, no cases of Intermittent remittent or ague
have occurred. —

I have never estimated the value of this medicine

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This disease has increased the number of cases, and we
are now in the midst of a severe, cold. To sustain
my own reasoning, however, with respect to the disease,
that it is not an inflammation, and of course to say
that those who have been prostrated for ten, twenty,
or thirty years, have views so immediately before
me on this subject, I mention that it may be, recollects to
us to learn "more medicine within the same time, than
I can!" I have sometimes been disposed to consider it
as a species of chronic inflammation of the stomach,
and it is certainly, in many practitioners, very an-
alogous to this disease. But by what means such a phre-
nology of the pulse is kept up for so great a length
of time; or how in this disease, the system is enabled
to bear up, under such an action of the pulse, as
usually found to prove not only injurious and
fatal, I am utterly unable to say. It is probable
that in this as in other diseases, when the long ac-
tion, once become habitual, the influence of over-
power, is greatly enhanced.

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"In the narrow & dark very little is known, the
present state is a subject of a dark mystery, and
perhaps our limited experiences, our narrow views,
and we are able to say what condition it is in the
existence of the other which enables us to describe this;
what in this, the same which enables us to describe
the future. But in this, in the future, which can
be a secret in mystery, &c. and in what respects
improves our condition, of possessing an unstable tem-
perature which exists to one, is in very high, & very low;
and we may hope that the issue will be distant
and we shall be able to understand the condition
in the future, & hence, many have seen the future
in the future, and one thing has succeeded in supplanting a
former, and each thing acting according to the theory
which we have assumed or conceived. There have been
such profuse revolutions in the mind of the mind
in the future; that we can hardly avoid thinking
that little is to be known with certainty, &
in the future - Similar men have wandered from

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conjecture to conjecture, no more than our thousand
year, and we do not yet perceive any prospect,
these conjectures being means to an end—

The more general remote causes of fevers
are, certain invisible exhalations, sometimes
more evidently arising from marshy grounds,
sometimes more obscurely diffused in the atmos-
phere, and sometimes obviously proceeding from
the bodies of our fellow-men. We are not able to
ascertain the nature of these effluvia, and this
only by conjecture, that we trace them in the
channels, by which they enter the body. The
changes which they operate on the solids, fluids,
or nervous system, before their action becomes
obvious are totally unknown to us—

As of the Fevers, so of the disease of
which I am treating, I think the remote cause
is sought for in the atmosphere. The
state of the atmosphere becomes more or less
— to produce fevers—



I am inclined to surmise, from observing the
different species of the same family, or in some res-
pects in the same species, that the same
kind of some members require pretty tedious treatments
which in fact the same doctors would apparently, know
how to, which prove highly beneficial. If I did
not think so, I would not.

As respects medicines generally, my opinion is
that they have been abused in the treatment of
a disease, that they usually cause in other diseases,
and, occasion ~~inconveniences~~ - It happens in the
lungs, so in this, & in other diseases which have
not been so well attended to, have more animation
than in any B. p. have been known to cause either
a violent inflammation or violent febrile action.

In the very acute which has occurred in that
kind of country has been marked by so high a tem-
perature, as in almost every instance to fail in
being relieved by the tartar & otherwise.

and, in spite of the attention it is, which gives

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to state, in this disease, I am fully inclined to say,
and judging from its effects I should consider it a very
permanent one - I have before remarked that it is found
in different individuals & in various I. some cases in
which it acts on the particular protuberance of
which it is the symptoms of. Preliminary assumption
is that there is a variety of it in duration and in the
rate which I have mentioned the disease was attended
with symptoms very similar to those of angina, le-
mis. But instead of atrophies, confluent, robustness,
but are said to be most liable to angina; in these
cases it selected a disease delicate, female -

The permanency of the principle, has induced
some to consider it as a superabundance of oxy-
gen in the air, & this supposition would appear to
receive some support from the circumstance, that
some of the symptoms, were the reverse of those which
were produced, by a deficiency of oxygen, as in ascen-
ding high mountains; nevertheless there have not
been wanting, others who imputed it to a deficiency



not, since it is known, that dangerous
might be sometimes, but others are not more
difficult to cure, and others them -

The objection however has been made against the
treatment, that this fever is at all dependent on
the atmosphere, because if that were the case, say
they, we make the physician see who resides in the same
climate should be attacked with it. But the same
objection might with great propriety be made to
any epidemic - in answer to the objection however as
relates to this fever, I would say that I believe this to
be the fact in a greater or less degree, in a little va-
riation or a slight deviation from the natural state,
may be perceived in the pulse &c almost all.

I am inclined to think that temperament has
a principal share in determining the point, who shall
be attacked by this disease, and to this I am led from
having observed that in almost every instance, it has
been particularly violent in its action, in persons of
the sanguineous temperament -

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having thus retained the more usual symptoms of this disease, it might be expected that I would recommend some mode of treatment. But my opinion was in itself so narrow, my attempting any thing to the kind, particularly as I have before stated, that almost all the articles of the Materia Medica, possessed of any great degree of activity, have been unavailingly employed in the different cases -

If such a disease should occur in my jurisdiction, I would treat it on general principles. If symptoms of dyspnoea were present, I would treat it as dyspnoea. If there were symptoms of Angina pectoris, by its appropriate remedies. If there were the symptoms of Pulmonary Consumption, I would employ the means antiseptic to the cure of a consumption of that disease. So - and as one of these means I would recommend a change of climate, and in this case I think it probable that a miasmatic country might prove most beneficial, from the circumstances I have stated,

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that, no case of Intermittent, or Relapsing Remittent
Fever, has occurred, since this disease first made its
appearance, although they were very common before.

When the febrile action of the blood vessels, has become
habitual, might not the Purific acid, be used with
advantage, in connexion with other means, to sub-
vert it?

Imperfect as the foregoing description of
this disease has necessarily been, for many reasons.
I conclude confidently, trusting that it, may solici-
t a lenient criticism & examination, and the sub-
ject excite that attention which it seems to merit,
from those whose prerogative it is to do me the honour of
reading this paper, and whose talents and acqui-
sitions, render so competent to elucidate the nature
of, and advise the proper remedies for diseases in
general; and that this disease may not be
allowed, to seek a station, in the already too cum-
bered list of the "Opprobria Medicorum."

The first of these is the fact that the
 human mind is not a blank slate at birth.
 It is filled with ideas and impressions
 which are the result of the influence of
 the environment upon the senses. These
 impressions are the raw material of
 thought, and it is the function of the
 mind to organize them into a coherent
 system of knowledge.

The second of these is the fact that the
 human mind is not a passive recipient
 of impressions. It is an active agent
 which selects and interprets the
 impressions which it receives. This
 process of selection and interpretation
 is the function of the intellect, and it
 is the result of the influence of the
 environment upon the mind. The
 intellect is the faculty which enables
 the mind to grasp the meaning of the
 impressions which it receives, and to
 organize them into a coherent system
 of knowledge.

W. W. W. W.

For the

William W. W.
of Tennessee

at the March 22, 1831